ASSESSMENT APPROACHES FOR THE FIRST YEAR APPLIED VOICE STUDIO

BY

LINDSAY KERRIGAN MEDINA

Submitted to the faculty of the
Jacobs School of Music in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Music
Indiana University
December, 2013

Accepted by the faculty of the Jacobs School of Music,

Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Music.

_____

Robert Harrison, Research Director

_____

Patricia Havranek

_____

Peter Miksza

_____

Timothy Noble

To my husband, Cody, and our daughters, Anne Marie and Harper Lee Medina.
You make music worth making

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and the members of my advisory and research committees. Patricia Havranek's encouragement, Timothy Noble's humor, and Brian Horne's attention to detail have served as wonderful motivators and examples during my time at Indiana University. I am grateful for Brent Gault's willingness to teach me, even when not enrolled in his classes. His commitment to music education is inspiring. I am deeply indebted to Peter Miksza, whose guest lecture on assessment in music education during the spring of 2011 introduced me to portfolio assessment, and who has continued to challenge me with varying perspectives since. I am grateful to Marcia Thom, who strove to nurture not just a voice, but a person. I will forever be a student of Robert Harrison, whose example of fine teaching, insistence of excellence, and dedication to the communicative power of music has motivated me to serve this fine art.

I am grateful for the example and support of my family, specifically, for my father's sensible thinking, my mother's passion, my grandmother's insistence that I learn to play the piano, my grandfather's belief in education, and my brothers' humor. They have suffered through innumerable performances, but I could not have felt more loved.

Finally, I am overwhelmed by the love of my husband. His dedication to my dreams astounds me daily. I see the light of the world in my two daughters, Anne Marie and Harper Lee. Already independent, musical, and intelligent young women, they are daily proof of God's love.

PREFACE

Assessment provides student, instructor, and administration with information regarding the student's progress, the teacher's effectiveness, and the department's strengths and weaknesses. Despite the burgeoning trend of incorporating assessment in other fields, private voice instructors have few assessment measures available for use, and the few that are available are often inappropriate. Pressure by accreditation organizations to detail the progress of students and teachers has left many voice instructors clamoring for means of describing their work. Incorporating frequent assessment and analyzing student performance will assist instructors in providing frequent and specific feedback that improves both student learning and teacher practice.

Following a brief introduction to assessment philosophy, this document will discuss methods by which a studio voice instructor may assign a course grade, diagnosis deficiencies in vocal technique, and evaluate a vocal performance. The chapters of the document are organized by assessment type. Sample assessment measures are included at the end of each relevant chapter. These fluid assessment measures provide a comprehensive method of describing the breadth of tasks and topics covered in applied voice lessons. Used collaboratively, the measures could improve teacher practice, encourage frequent feedback, and advance student learning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
PREFACE	vi
Chapter 1. Introduction To Assessment	1
Chapter 2. Diagnostic Assessment: Using Assessment To Inform Teaching Practice	16
Chapter 3. Product Assessment: Defining Successful Vocal Performance	25
Chapter 4. Semester Assessment: Assigning The Course Grade	36
CONCLUSION	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY	51

Chapter 1

Introduction to Assessment

Assessment methods in the applied studio often consist of lesson attendance, perceived effort, or simply the unpredictable whims of the studio teacher. Though theories and philosophies of assessment have dominated general educational discussion, assessment and objective measurement have yet to consistently filter into the higher education applied voice studio. Effective assessment is an instructional tool. When designed correctly, assessment may support and articulate instructional goals, provide information on student achievement, and offer insight into teacher effectiveness. Customizable, reliable, and valid assessment methods in the applied voice curriculum can foster the effective habits and techniques of the successful singer.

The process of assessment typically includes both measurement and evaluation. Measurement refers to the action of collecting quantitative data and to the tool used to collect that data.[1] Once the information has been gathered, it may be evaluated to determine how it aligns with specific values.[2] Though the systems of higher education value the shorthand of quantitative data, this is rarely beneficial to the student. Seldom does a "B+" adequately communicate to a student what he or she is doing well, let alone what he or she should do differently. Assessments that provide the opportunity to offer qualitative data—feedback that acknowledges an observation and provides advice—are

---

[1] Darwin E. Walker, *Teaching Music: Managing the Successful Music Program*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998), 182.

[2] Thomas W. Goolsby, "Portfolio Assessment for Better Evaluation," *Music Educators Journal* 48, no. 3 (Nov. 1995): 40.

most helpful to the student.

With the inability of the vocal arts community to establish a common vocabulary, and the many aspects of proper singing technique that cannot be reduced to a calculable number, it is no doubt that voice educators shy away from utilizing assessment as a teaching tool.[3] Yet assessments offer the opportunity to inform all those involved in the educational process. Thomas Kellaghan and Vincent Greaney summarize the many purposes of assessment:

> [Assessment] is used (a) to describe students' learning, to identify and diagnose learning problems, and to plan further teaching/learning; (b) to provide guidance for students in selecting further courses of study or in deciding on vocational options; (c) to motivate students by providing goals or targets, by clarifying the nature of learning tasks, and by letting students, and their teachers, know how they are progressing; (d) to certify that individuals have reached a certain level of competence; and (e) to select individuals for the next level of the education system or for a job.[4]

Assessment does not simply provide information directed at the improvement of student learning. Instead, the resulting data may also inform the institution and instructor of strengths and weaknesses in specific courses or departments. For example, a department-wide assessment may find that all students have successfully mastered the foreign language diction courses with one notable exception—French diction. The department entertains several courses of action: to expand the French diction course into two semesters, to place the French diction course after the students have studied the basics of diction in the English diction course, to include a review of the International

---

[3] J. Van den Berg and W. Vennard, "Toward an Objective Vocabulary," *NATS Bulletin* 15 (1959): 10-15.

[4] Thomas Kellaghan and Vincent Greaney, *Using Assessment to Improve the Quality of Education* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2001), 20.

Phonetic Alphabet in the schedule of the French diction course, or to re-evaluate the methods in which the French diction course is taught. The assessment remains focused on student learning, but rather than place the blame for poor understanding on the students, the department takes the responsibility to attempt a different approach. The results of the assessment fuel the discussion for departmental and institutional growth.

Ultimately, the goal of assessment is to provide the educator with the data necessary to make practical decisions. Assessment informs action. An instructor chooses material and how it is taught. Having observed a student's rising sternum and shallow breath, a voice instructor may make the instructional decision to review aloud the physiology of the respiratory system. A noticeable trend in graduates who lack a certain skill set may encourage an institution to alter the curriculum by implementing new courses or degree requirements. Auditions are a form of selection, resulting in the inclusion and exclusion of students from a particular group. Choosing not to cast a student in the opera scenes program prohibits him from experiencing a low-stakes performance opportunity. Chair numbers, as in the seating arrangement of a musical group by performance ability, or voice classifications in a choir are placement decisions that determine how and in what role students participate.[5] Clearly, decisions based on assessment permeate the educational process and color a student's experiences at an institution. Carefully designed measures provide information to improve student learning.

Used correctly, assessment provides valuable details that stimulate thoughtful teaching and learning. Yet before determining what and how to assess, teachers much first define what it is students should be able to do at the end of instruction. The

---

[5] Robert M. Thorndike and Tracy Thorndike-Christ, *Measurement and Evaluation in Psychology and Education*, 8th ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2010), 7-8.

instructional goals for a first year voice student will differ depending on his or her ability, musical knowledge, and professional aspirations. They will also differ from student to student. The instructor should consider the student's prior knowledge and abilities, the difficulty of the process and how well the student masters the intended outcome. How the task will affect future endeavors, whether the task represents a valued skill that will reoccur, and the feasibility of the task should also be considered. After scrutinizing the resources, student motivation, and instructional time available, the instructor should evaluate the list of criteria for completeness. Figure 1.1 provides a series of questions designed to help the educator create and evaluate a list of instructional objectives. An example of instructional objectives for the first semester beginning voice student is provided in figure 1.2.

Creating and Evaluating Instructional Goals

- What skills and knowledge has the student previously exhibited?
- How well have previous tasks been mastered?
- How difficult is the task?
- How will this task affect future endeavors?
- Will this task reappear in future endeavors?
- How motivated is the student to master the task?
- How much instructional time is available?
- How does this skill relate to the student's professional aspirations?
- How well has the task been mastered?

Figure 1.1. Creating and Evaluating Instructional Goals.

It is worth reiterating that instructional goals will vary based on the experiences, prior knowledge, and aspirations of the student. Customizing desired outcomes provides a trajectory of study. Additionally, the voice teacher may encounter a student whose

intellectual abilities outweigh his or her technical abilities. In addition to choosing repertoire that challenges the student's academic sensibilities, sharing instructional goals that prioritize other musical and transferable skills will allow the student to focus on vocal technique while keeping them motivated and interested in their progress.

The wealth of habits and abilities necessary to teach or perform music are evidenced in the variety of instructional goals provided in figure 1.2. In addition to the analysis of specific vocal components, such as resonance and breath management, the instructor must consider the secondary skills necessary to succeed in the vocal profession. A voice alone will not ensure a successful performing career; instead, the student must call on a variety of skills, including time management, goal setting, and knowledge of his or her craft. Additionally, the mission of the institution may prioritize skills or personal qualities such as communication or service to others. In determining what to teach and how to teach it, the instructor must identify what she wishes her students be able to do.

These supplementary areas fall under educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom's taxonomies of educational objectives. In his 1956 work by the same name, Bloom describes his desire to recast the taxonomies used for the classification of animals into sets of taxonomies of educational objectives. He states, "[The taxonomy of educational objectives] is intended to provide for classification of the goals of our educational system. It is especially intended to help [educators] discuss these problems with greater precision…. This should facilitate the exchange of information about their curricular developments and evaluation devices."[6]

---

[6] Benjamin S. Bloom, ed. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook, Cognitive Domain* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1956), 1.

Sample Instructional Goals for First Semester Beginning Voice Student

I. Student reads music independently
- Identifies musical notation by note or sign name
- Describes basic musical terminology including tempo, dynamic, and articulation markings
- Matches musical notes on the score with notes on the piano
- Accurately sight sings melody and rhythms of a basic, diatonic melody
- Learns notes and rhythms of piece independently

II. Applies basics of classical vocal technique
- Defines common voice terminology, i.e., *appoggio*, *passaggio*, *Fach*, zygomatic lift, onset, and vibrato
- Explains the physiology and functioning of efficient breath management
- Demonstrates appoggio
- Phonates efficiently
- Incorporates continuous vibrato
- Applies efficient resonance
- Following an error, hypothesizes a method or action to correct it
- Identifies sound print, his or her natural unimpeded voice

III. Identifies major song, opera, and/or oratorio composers in English, German, French, and Italian
- Lists major vocal composers and their works
- Lists musical characteristics of a composer's works
- Identifies the composer's contemporaries
- Chooses suitable repertoire from a major composer
- Evaluates a composer's writing for the voice

IV. Values the classical music tradition
- Attends classical music performances
- Identifies recordings of singers who sing in the classical vocal music tradition
- Offers a set of criteria and values by which other performances could be evaluated
- Defends evaluation with references to the score, style, performance practice, history, and literature

V. Utilizes trade resources
- Utilizes resources that provide translations, interpretative insights, or historical data
- Converts foreign language text into International Phonetic Alphabet symbols
- Sight reads proper diction of a text written in the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols
- Refers to various resources when defending an interpretation of a piece

VI. Demonstrates professionalism as respect for art
- Professionally introduces self, accompanist, and the piece of music before beginning a performance
- Professionally acknowledges the audience following performance
- Applies task management skills during individual practice and rehearsals with accompanist
- Independently prepares for lessons, rehearsals, and performances

VII. Student communicates through singing
- Incorporates musical markings (tempo, articulation, dynamics, etc.) into performances
- Independently develops a method of communicating the interpretation of the piece
- Utilizes pitches and rhythms as a language to communicate ideas
- Synthesizes musical knowledge and singing technique to communicate through music

Figure 1.2. Sample Instructional Goals for the First Semester Beginning Voice Student.

Educational objectives may be classified into one of three domains: the cognitive domain, the affective domain, and the psychomotor domain. A domain is a taxonomy—a hierarchical listing of classes, as evidenced in Figure 1.3. The skills and knowledge of the lower classes are likely to be built upon in subsequent classes. Traditional classroom assessment methods, such as fill-in-the-blank or multiple-choice tests, most frequently measure the cognitive domain. According to Bloom, this domain "…includes those objectives which deal with recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities and skills."[7] Determining the characteristic elements of the musical style, recalling the background of the composer and poet, or applying correct diction could be assessed under the cognitive domain.

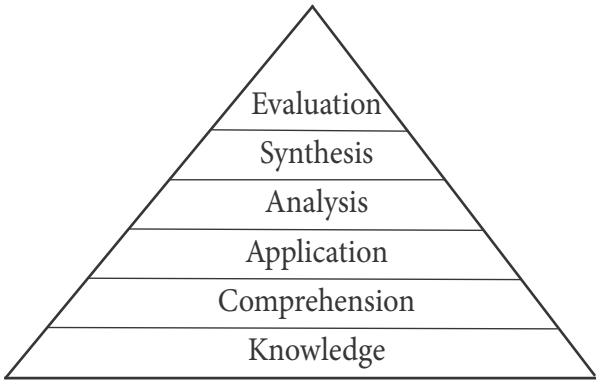

Figure 1.3 Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Cognitive Domain.

The affective domain "describes changes in interest, attitudes and values, and the development of appreciations and adequate adjustment."[8] The classification of the affective domain is illustrated in Figure 1.4. The ability to self-motivate, to identify himself as a singer, or to adopt a better tonal model are characterized as advances in the

[7]Bloom, 7

[8] Ibid.

affective domain. Teachers concerned with retaining and recruiting students to their music programs will find attention to the affective domain helpful. By incorporating an interest in attitudes and values, instructors can preemptively identify whether a student is internally or externally motivated, or whether a student suffers from low self-efficacy. Assessment feedback may be designed to encourage attitudes that foster successful singing.

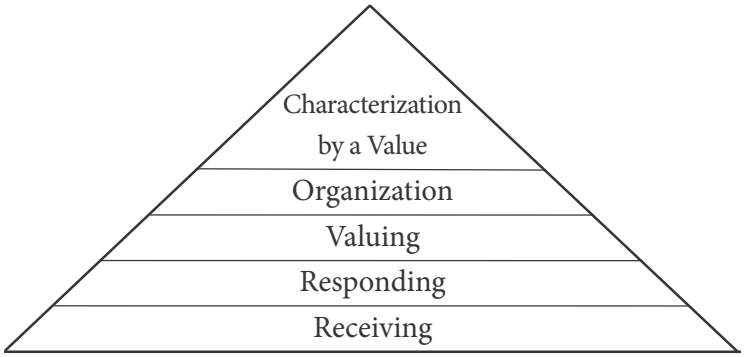

Figure 1.4. Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Affective Domain.

When a student properly coordinates the vocal mechanism as if by a natural reflex, he or she has mastered the psychomotor domain, or the "manipulative and motor skill area."[9] Unlike the aforementioned domains, the psychomotor taxonomy created by Anita Harrow, not Benjamin Bloom. Harrow states, "[The cognitive and affective taxonomies] enabled professionals to accurately communicate and comprehend stated educational goals."[10] Harrow classifies expressive movement, or communicative

[9] Bloom, 7.

[10] Anita J. Harrow, *A Taxonomy of the Psychomotor Domain* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972), 9.

movements such as "body posture and carriage, gestures and facial expressions," as the highest level of the psychomotor development.[11] Thus, if a student struggles to physically adapt his or her body to meet the demands of the interpretation, the instructor may consult the taxonomy's hierarchy, found in figure 1.5, to determine a level at which the student will be successful. According to the taxonomy, if a student is unable to communicate expressively, the instructor should suggest that the he or she practice skilled movement through physical activities such as sports, exercise, or dance.

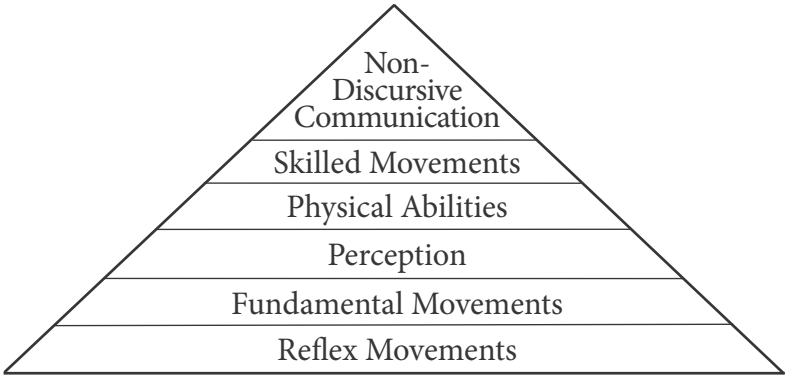

Figure 1.5. Harrow's Taxonomy of the Psychomotor Domain.

Adaptations of the learning taxonomies, such as a revision of Benjamin Bloom's cognitive and affective domains, and taxonomies of the psychomotor domain put forth by Elizabeth J. Simpson and Ravindrakumar H. Dave, provide additional perspectives on the types of tasks that lead to student mastery. Instructors may find these alternative methods helpful in creating diverse instructional goals.

A voice is not made in four years of voice study. Yet the habits and values ingrained in that time encourage the student to be an independent learner. Stating the

[11] Harrow, 92

instructional goals elucidates values and expectations and will help both the teacher and the student prioritize their actions. Once instructional goals are defined, the teacher provides opportunities for the student to exhibit mastery. This process, often referred to as "backwards course design," ensures that what is valued is measured. Assessments are centered less on what students know and more on what students can and should be able to do. Through instructional goals, teachers convey valued skills and ways in which mastery may be indicated.

As goals affect instruction, the purpose and desired information affect how assessment results are analyzed. Assessments may serve as a summative example of the learning that has occurred over a specified period of time, or as a dynamic, diagnostic snapshot of the student's current capabilities. Results may be measured in comparison to the scores of others (a norm-referenced approach), or judged based on a predetermined standard of achievement (a criterion-referenced approach). Products, processes, reflections, or some combination of tasks may be measured, providing the instructor with insight into the student musician. Oftentimes, the form of assessment will remain the same, even when the results are used differently. For example, the tool used to measure a student's current capabilities might be identical to that used to measure learning over time. The difference, however, occurs when the instructor utilizes the information provided in the formative assessment to focus future teaching. Summative assessment is static while formative assessment provides for the fluid exchange of information.

The field of vocal arts often glorifies summative assessment measures. A popular method for determining career readiness is through vocal competitions, in which singers compete against others of varying genders, ages, and *Fächer* while singing different

repertoire. Despite the vast differences in what is presented, competition adjudicators delineate winners through the norm-referenced approach. Competitors' abilities are judged in comparison to one another. No conscious effort is made to level the playing field by considering that lower male voices often mature slower than high female voices, that certain repertoire is more difficult to sing, or that age and experience contribute to one's performing ability. Instead, the winner is chosen from a pool of disparate singers.

Many teachers will readily agree that comparing students' abilities is not the best method of assessing students. Noting the problematic norm-referenced approach of vocal competitions, many institutions of higher education require students to complete a jury in which students are evaluated by a standard of criteria. The assessment is again static. The evaluator cannot distinguish the student who has exhibited remarkable changes in behavior from the student who is naturally able. Emphasizing product—without considering a student's progress—may inadvertently punish those students who make a concerted effort to better their technique and reward those who are lazy.

Neither an exclusively norm-referenced or criterion-referenced approach provides the voice instructor with the breadth of material needed to make informed decisions, nor do competitions and juries adequately reflect authentic student performance. In order for assessment measures to be authentic, they must prove reliable and valid. Reliability, or the consistency with which the data will reoccur under similar circumstances, is necessary in determining if the assessment measure is appropriate. Fixating on a mistake that only occurs due to a rare and extraneous circumstance is not a valuable use of time. Similarly, ignoring a recurring error is irresponsible. While assessments capture a mere moment in time, that resulting portrait should be representative of the student's true

ability. It is rarely appropriate to make decisions based on the performance of a singer suffering from a bout of ill health, as rest and a few days time will convey quite a different and more consistent picture. Similarly, the tool must measure what it claims; the assessment methods must prove valid. A well-written recital review does nothing to inform the instructor of how well the student sings, merely how he writes!

Choosing assessment measures for the voice studio is indeed complex. Just because a characteristic is easy to measure does not mean it is valued. Many traits of singing may be easily measured using systems of quantification already in place. For example, time may be measured in minutes and seconds, dynamics in decibels, and pitch in hertz. Yet the relative lengths, gradations in volume, or frequencies of pitches do not translate into a riveting musical performance. Unfortunately, students are regularly evaluated on these traits alone. An adjudication form for a national singing organization's regional competition included space for the judges to list the performer's selections and piece durations. Though the form provided ample space for comments, without the consideration of assessment as an instructional tool, the form can prove invalid. One frustrated student found a single comment on her form: "Over the time limit." The judge sacrificed the opportunity for meaningful instruction and feedback for ease of use.

Quantitative traits are easier to measure, but it is the qualitative traits that most distinguish proper singing. Teachers should not seek to translate every action into numerical form. Rather, explicitly defining terminology will ensure the measure may be used and interpreted successfully. If a quantitative mark must be used, teachers may increase the likelihood that the assessment will prove instructional by supporting that mark with specific qualitative feedback. The student who receives a semester grade of a

B+ without qualitative feedback may only guess at which behaviors need modification. Qualitative feedback highlights the teacher's observations and advises the student on how to proceed. This exchange of information—not the shorthand symbols schools inadequately use to mark proficiency—motivates effective changes in behavior.

The breadth of skills and information inherent in the private voice studio engage all three domains. A single assessment that consists merely of attendance, attitude, participation in studio events, recital, opera or recording reviews, or the memorization of a predetermined quantity of pieces, are inadequate. Not only do they fail to represent the amount and type of work a student completes throughout the semester, but they also do not offer the instructor information on how a student might proceed. These aforementioned assessment methods, which often prove unreliable and invalid, do little to motivate an independent learning process or superior product.

Juries, upper-divisionals, and recitals are another method of assessment common to the musical arts. These methods, in which a student's grade is either partially or fully determined by a single performance in front of a selection of faculty members, closely resembles the circumstances of "high-stakes" testing. Using tests and assessments without the consideration of other learning activities, processes, or techniques to make significant decisions is frowned upon in educational psychology. The stress placed on the student during a high-stakes testing circumstance could impede his or her ability to perform at the best of his or her potential. The use of juries, upper-divisions, and recitals is certainly appropriate to the applied voice curriculum because it replicates the demands of the singing profession. However, a student must not be assessed on that which he or she was not taught. The instructor should ensure that the student has had ample

opportunities to practice performance in a similar environment, such as in studio recitals or master classes. The adjudication measure must be created with care. Regardless of whether the jury, upper-divisional, or recital accounts for the whole or merely a portion of the applied voice grade, the measure must be a reliable and valid account of the student's semester work.

Perhaps a more serious side effect of high-stakes testing results in the disregard for all assessment methods. The "Lake Wobegon Effect," coined after Garrison Keiller's fictional town where "all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average,"[12] nullifies the assessment process. Though juries, recitals and upper-divisionals may assess some skills stressed in lessons—namely, musicality, diction, and tone quality—the measures frequently lack reliability and validity. If a primary purpose of assessment is to detail the student's progress, then awarding all students high marks regardless of the product or processes evidenced eliminates a valuable teaching tool. Yet those who participate in this type of grade inflation due so with good intentions. Recruiting (and maintaining) students is frequently a prominent component of an instructor's job description, and many fear that awarding a grade less than an A will decrease enrollment. Yet caution is advised. Ignoring the strides made by students who progress a great deal yet continue to sing at a lower level could prove demoralizing. Additionally, assigning a poor mark to a student without evidence of the crummy performance good prove a nightmare in our litigious society. To most accurately inform stakeholders—student, teacher, parents, and administrators—an assessment

[12] Thorndike, 434.

method is needed that balances the measurement of predetermined criteria with the progress of a student is necessary.

Chapter 2

Diagnostic Assessment: Using Assessment to Inform Teaching Practice

Voice instructors are charged with creating individual plans for educational success for numerous students each semester. In addition to creating and evaluating the instructional goals for each student, the instructor must track the student's progress. The numerous skills and techniques voice instructors hope to teach their students has already been discussed. This chapter will focus attention on the specific vocal skills necessary for communicative singing.

If the purpose of assessment is to inform the formation of future educative experiences, the instructor will benefit from a systemic method of evaluating a student's entire vocal technique. The following measures are intended to help the instructor diagnosis the student's challenges. When completed quarterly, the instructor maintains a record of the barriers consistently impeding efficient vocal sound. The measures are formatted as a checklist to facilitate ease of use. As such, the wording of each criterion requires that the student is either performing the task correctly or incorrectly. If the student is inconsistent, the criteria should be marked as incorrect. If the instructor wishes to assess the degree or frequency in which a behavior occurs, the rating scale or rubric, presented in chapter 3, would be a more appropriate measurement tool.

Again, these measures are designed for the teacher. It is likely that first year beginning students will have numerous insufficiencies. The checklists will help the instructor to identify the area of concern and prioritize the focus of instruction. The checklists do not suggest methods for correcting the singers' shortcomings. Classes in

acoustics and physiology, literature on vocal pedagogy, or instruction by a master teacher will assist the voice instructor in choosing how to design educational experiences that will teach the student. Instead, these measures are designed to assist the instructor in training the ear and organizing the many behaviors exhibited in a student's performance.

The checklists are divided by category: breath management, phonation, resonance, scale unification, and communicative singing. The topics are arranged to facilitate sequential instruction. Phonation cannot be mastered before breath management, nor scale unification before resonance. The final section, titled "Communicative Singing: The Goal" reminds all musicians of our work's purpose. Music is a language. Pitches and rhythms are the tools used to communicate. Through technique, musicians may exhaust the abundant options inherent in pitch and rhythm in order to communicate efficiently and effectively.

The sectional organization of the checklists allows the instructor to focus his or her attention to one aspect of vocal technique. Attempting to complete the entire assessment during the span of one art song will prove difficult and is not recommended. It may take several lessons before an instructor completes the whole assessment, particularly when the teacher is unfamiliar with the student's voice.

Checklists force the instructor to make an "all-or-nothing" judgment on the student's singing. This may make some instructors uncomfortable. It is helpful to think in terms of mastery. If the checklists are used honestly—either the student has mastered the behavior or he has not—and appropriately—for the purpose of pinpointing an area for further instruction—steps may be taken to advance a singer's abilities. It is not advisable, however, to place the completed assessment results into the hands of the students without

further comment. As mentioned in previous chapters, effective teaching stems from creating educational opportunities for students to test their abilities, followed by ample feedback. Effective feedback consists of an observation of a behavior, and a recommended change in future behavior. For example, a teacher who observes a student breathing clavicularly might first observe, “I noticed your chest rise during inhalation and collapse throughout the phrase.” Following this non-judgemental observation, she might suggest, “Assume a noble posture throughout the piece and focus on the lateral distention of the torso.” When confronted with observations and methods to master the problem, students are rarely demotivated. Instead, the information empowers them to take charge of their own learning and try again.

Diagnostic Checklists

Appoggio

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Breath Management	Sternum slumps	Moderately high sternum	
	Shoulders slump	Relaxed shoulders	
	Lifted/tense shoulders	Relaxed shoulders	
	Lower umbilical and epigastric region distend	Lateral distention in the thoracic, epigastric, umbilical and lumbo-dorsal area	
	Pectoral muscles expand	Pectoral muscles are stable	
	Body alignment changes during inhalation and/or exhalation	Body alignment remains stable	
	Breaths overfill the lungs	Breathes to replenish	
	Noisy inhalation	Silent inhalation	
	Attempts to hold breath before onset by closing glottis	Glottis remains open before onset	

Figure 2.1. Diagnostic Checklist: Appoggio.

Phonation

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Onset	Breath flows through the glottis before phonation occurs	Flow of breath through the glottis and phonation occur simultaneously	
	Incomplete closure of the glottis	Glottis closes firmly	
	Folds approximate before phonation	Glottis remains open until phonation	
	Adduction of the folds makes an audible sound before phonation	Adduction of the folds occurs without additional noise	

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Release	Vocal folds gradually open as phonation ends	Glottis fully closes during phonation	
	Vocal folds approximate more firmly as phonation ends	Closure of glottis is not subject to additional tension	

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Vibrato	Pitch undulations are too slow or too wide; wobble	Pulsations in the pitch create a pleasing and free tone	
	Pitch undulations are too fast; tremolo	Pulsations in the pitch create a pleasing and free tone	
	Tongue or abdominal region shake to produce fluctuations in pitch	Singer utilizes *appoggio*; tongue remains free of excess tension	
	Tone lacks vibrancy	Coordination of muscles and absence of unnecessary tension result in vibrato on every pitch	

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Agility	Uses [h] to articulate melismatic passages	Articulates melismatic passages without aspirating	
	Melismatic passages are controlled by singing straight tone	Folds vibrate on each pitch	

Figure 2.2. Diagnostic Checklist: Phonation.

Resonance

[ɑ]	*Incorrect*	*Correct*	*-/+*
	Lower jaw ascends	Lower jaw descends	
	Tongue arches	Tongue flattens	

[i]	*Incorrect*	*Correct*	*-/+*
	Sides of the mouth constrict; lips elongate vertically	Sides of the mouth elongate horizontally	
	Excessive space between bottom and upper teeth	Limited space between bottom and upper teeth	
	Apex of tongue does not contact lower front teeth	Apex of tongue touches lower front teeth	
	Tongue flat	Tongue arched near roof of mouth	
	Tongue not sufficiently arched; makes no contact with hard palette	Tongue in contact with hard palette on upper left and right sides	

[e]	*Incorrect*	*Correct*	*-/+*
	Sides of the mouth constrict; lips elongate vertically	Sides of the mouth elongate horizontally	
	Excessive space between bottom and upper teeth	Limited space between bottom and upper teeth; more space than in [i]	
	Apex of tongue does not contact lower front teeth	Apex of tongue touches lower front teeth	
	Tongue flat	Tongue arched near roof of mouth	
	Tongue not sufficiently arched; makes no contact with hard palette	Tongue in contact with hard palette on upper left and right sides	

[ɛ]	*Incorrect*	*Correct*	*-/+*
	Tongue arched or tense	Tongue lowered to a neutral position	
	Tongue does not contact bottom front teeth	Tip of the tongue touches bottom front teeth	
	Lips protrude or sides of the mouth are pulled	Sides of the mouth are neutral	

[ɔ]	*Incorrect*	*Correct*	*-/+*
	Lips remain neutral	Lips round	
	Insufficient space between teeth	Space between the teeth; more space than in [*a*]	
	No elevation in the back of the tongue	Some elevation in the back of the tongue	

[o]	*Incorrect*	*Correct*	*-/+*
	Lips remain neutral	Lips round and protrude slightly	
	Front of tongue is elevated	Front of the tongue is depressed	
	Back of tongue is depressed	Back of the tongue is elevated	

[u]	*Incorrect*	*Correct*	*-/+*
	No elevation in the back of the tongue	Back of the tongue is elevated	
	Too much space between the tongue and the soft palate	Little space between the tongue and the soft palate	
	Lips not round and/or do not protrude; Separation of the lips is too great	Lips round and protrude; less separation of the lips than in [o]	

Figure 2.3. Diagnostic Checklist: Resonance.

Scale Unification

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Registration	Chin and larynx raise inadvertently to accommodate ascending scale	Chin and larynx remain stable to	
	Male singer resorts to falsetto at *secondo passaggio*	Male singer maintains similar tone by adjusting vocal mechanism to accommodate *secondo passaggio*	
	Behaviors of chest voice, or prominent use of the thyro-arytenoid's shortening and thickening actions, continue into the middle voice.	Greater use of the crico-thyroid, or lengthening and thinning the vocalis, occurs at lower pitches to ensure a smooth transition	
	Behaviors of head voice, or primary use of the crico-thyroid's lengthening and thinning actions, continue into the chest voice.	Greater use of the thyro-arytenoids, or shortening and thickening the vocalis, occurs at higher pitches to ensure a smooth transition	

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Vowel Modification	Lower pitches over-emphasize low formants; lacks brilliance.	Vowels should be modified towards a more closed or front neighbor vowel	
	Higher pitches over-emphasize high formants; shrill.	Vowels should be modified towards a more neutral, open, or back neighbor vowel	
	Different vowels cause marked timbre differences across the scale.	Formation of vowel sounds are modified to achieve a uniform timbre across the scale	

Figure 2.4 Diagnostic Checklist: Scale Unification.

Communicative Singing: The Goal

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Musicality	High notes differ in quality from the surrounding phrase	The apex of the phrase is united; the quality of the high note is similar to the notes surrounding it	
	Pitches are isolated	Musical phrase has a sense of forward momentum	
	Exudes physical or mental anxiety	Exudes physical and mental ease	
	Sudden physical changes occur at a particular part of the voice	Gradual physical changes occur throughout the voice	
	Technical accuracy supersedes communication	Vocal function supports the text and drama; communication supersedes all	

	Incorrect	*Correct*	*-/+*
Dynamic Variation	Dynamic changes are marked by a change in tonal quality and physical sensations (sudden shift in the antagonism of the crico-thyroid and the thyro-artenoid balance)	Muscle equilibrium is maintained, regardless of the dynamic level	
	Piano singing is manufactured by adding more breath to the tone	Decreased airflow and increased air pressure produce piano singing	
	Loud singing by adding more subglottic air pressure to the tone	Increased air flow and decreased air pressure produce forte tones	
	Soft onset occurs for piano tones; hard or glottal onset occur for forte tones	Balanced onset begins phrases at all dynamic levels	
	Timbre of voice changes depending on dynamic level	Uniform timbre is present throughout dynamic range	
	Excessive breath pressure causes physical tension; "pushing"	Breath management conserves proper air pressure to air flow ratio; muscles maintain equilibrium	
	Insufficient air pressure or air flow cause overworking of laryngeal muscles; also "pushing"	Breath management conserves proper air pressure to air flow ratio; muscles maintain equilibrium	

Figure 2.5 Diagnostic Checklist: Communicative Singing—The Goal

Chapter 3

Product Assessment: Defining Successful Vocal Performance

Teachers of voice rarely limit instruction to the mechanics of vocal technique. Many strive to educate the entire musician. From relying on history and theory to support a piece's interpretation, to discussing life management skills in an effort to maximize the efficiency of rehearsal, the breadth and depth of material taught by a voice instructor—or learned by a student—cannot adequately be assessed through one type of measurement. The previous chapter focused on recording the student's various behaviors. Occasionally, the instructor will want an assessment measure that isolates the vocal performance. Though these assessments can certainly fuel teaching practice, it's purpose is somewhat different from the checklists provided in the previous chapter. A checklist indicates whether a behavior is present or absent; rating scales and rubrics indicate the frequency or degree in which the characteristic is present.

Rating scales may be numerical or descriptive. In a numerical rating scale, the frequency or degree of a characteristic is represented by a number. Every effort should be made to ensure that the assessment is easy to use, and the differences in numerical levels should clearly correspond to differences in a behavior's frequency or degree. This is most easily accomplished by a descriptive rating scale, in which the types of performances are characterized through brief depictions at each level. Numbers may also be present at each level of the descriptive rating scale to facilitate scoring. Figure 3.1 provides an example rating scale.

Many state-affiliates of national music education organizations offer choral and band competitions that utilize rating scales to discriminate high achievement. Yet without more specific feedback, the likelihood that a student will modify behavior based on a rating-scale score is slim. The items of the example rating scale include the tenants of vocal performance most valued by the author. Each broad category is further described by the items below it. For example, one defining element of tone quality is whether or not the tone is well-supported. Complications occur when broad categories require different numbers of item delineation. The broad category title "tone quality," for example, is characterized by four test items, while the broad category titled "musicality" is characterized by six test items. If one purpose of conducting a rating-scale assessment is to include a numerical score, instructors might disagree with the natural weighting of the assessment. The voice instructor could easily weight each category according to his or her beliefs of what constitutes beautiful vocal production.

Rubrics are used in much the same way as rating scales. Rubrics allow the instructor to score the various degrees and frequencies of a task with multiple dimensions. Yet they can expand on the information found in a rating scale—frequency and degree—by also including judgmental qualities. This may be helpful when using the assessment tool for determining the winner of a competition. For example, the sample rubric in Figure 3.2 states that to score a 4, the attribute being evaluated must demonstrate excellent technique that supports expressive and communicative singing. In the broad category labeled "technique," the instructor must determine if a singer's audible breath is due to obstruction and lapse of technique, thereby earning a score of 3, or if the sound of inhalation enhances communication, thereby earning a score of a 4.

Despite an instructor's best efforts to create a rating scale or rubric with enough specificity to indicate the total range of possible behavior, the teacher must still take the time to indicate when and where the behaviors occurred. Often, telling a student that his or her diction was incorrect is not enough information. Feedback that indicates particular measure numbers, demonstrates the mistake made by the student, and suggests changes of behavior provide the student with the information, tools, and motivation needed to succeed.

The scoring of both rating scales and rubrics can be especially difficult. Of particular concern are the judges' biases. Items present on the rating scale should emphasize the desired qualities in singing performance. Thus, if the instructor does not value a trait or quality present on the example scale, it should be eliminated. Similarly, values not represented in the rating scale items should be added and defined.

Many judges are inclined to score students based on personal biases. Some judges rate all students at the high-end of the scale, resulting in a generosity bias, while others are prone to severity bias, or scoring all students at the low-end of the scale. Those who rate all students as average are described as having a bias of central tendency. Finally, many judges allow their relationship with the student to color their assessment. Students with whom the judge has a favorable relationship tend to score higher than those students whose relationship with the judge is disagreeable. This scoring error, termed the halo effect, does not help student or teacher. It prioritizes fluctuating feelings and obscures the student's strengths and weaknesses.

To combat potential bias, rubrics attempt to describe all possible responses at each scoring level, while rating scales often include definitions of terminology.

Additionally, rating scales may provide an even number of choices to target errors of central tendency. This forces judges to place students above or below the midpoint. Finally, the accuracy and reliability of the measure will be greatly improved by educating judges about personal biases. Training the judges to be self-aware, ensuring that the rating scale is a low-stakes assessment, and insisting that the information gathered form the assessment is of value encourages judges to be honest and objective. If judges have been trained to use the measure, and if the measure clearly communicates the ranges of degree, quality, and level of frequency possible, the scores of multiple judges should be similar. This high level of inter-rater reliability not only ensures that students are not victims of personal biases, but also indicates that the qualities asserted by the assessment measure are deemed important by every judge. Consistently rewarding performances of high quality communicates the values present in the measure. To borrow an adage from general education assessment, “what is measured is treasured.”

Medina Voice Performance Rating Scale

Key
0: Never
1: Occasionally
2: Frequently
3: Always

Tone Quality	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Tone is well-supported.				
Tonal quality is well-balanced; it is neither too dark nor too bright.				
Tone is even in all registers.				
Intonation is accurate.				

Musicality	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Legato line is present throughout.				
Placement of breaths is musically and/or dramatically appropriate.				
Demonstrates command of dynamic changes.				
Phrases are musical.				
Tempi are appropriate.				
Displays many vocal colors.				

Stage Deportment and Interpretation	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Facial expressions are appropriate and emotive.				
Posture exudes energy, good technique, and/or the character of the piece.				
Physical movements align with the dramatic impetus of the character				

Technique	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Diction is correct and intelligible.				
Vocal style is appropriate to the piece and genre.				
The pitches are correct.				
The rhythms are correct.				
Vocal projection is appropriate for performance setting.				
Breaths are controlled and inaudible.				
Vibrato is even and natural.				

Terminology

Tone Quality	
Well-supported	Proper balance of air pressure and air flow
Tonal quality	Beauty or clarity of the tone
Intonation	Pitches are accurately relative to one another

Musicality	
Legato	Connection of sound from note to note
Musically and/or dramatically appropriate	Does not interrupt and/or distract from the musical line or dramatic impetus
Dynamic changes	Contrast in volume between loud and soft
Musical	Shaped into musical segments
Tempi	Speed of the music according to score or style
Vocal colors	Changes in tone quality to reflect the dramatic impetus or musical style

Stage Deportment and Interpretation	
Facial expressions	Movements of the face to reflect the character or drama of the piece
Posture	Position of the body

Technique	
Diction	Pronunciation of the text
Style	Understanding of the composer's musical intent and consistent with the historical period of the composition
Correct	As written
Vocal projection	Ability to adjust the voice to be audible throughout the performance hall
Vibrato	Naturally occurring fluctuation of pitch

Figure 3.1. Medina Voice Performance Rating Scale.

Medina Voice Performance Rubric

	1 Serious flaws inhibit expressivity and communication	2 Evidence that technique is on the right track, but flaws and inconsistencies threaten communication	3 Good technique; minor flaws or inconsistencies occasionally inhabit communication	4 Excellent technique supports expressive and communicative singing
Tone Quality	Tone not supported; does not maintain balanced ratio of air pressure/air flow	Air pressure/air flow ratio is occasionally balanced; tone is frequently unsupported	Air pressure/air flow ratio is almost always balanced; tone is rarely unsupported	Tone is well-supported; balance of air pressure/air flow ratio is maintained throughout
	Tone is consistently too dark or too bright	Tone is frequently too dark or too bright	Tone quality is well-balanced, but occasionally it is too dark or too bright	Tonal quality is well-balanced
	Tone is not even in all registers; Different parts of the scale have a disparate sound quality	Tone quality changes at different parts of the scale	Occasionally, different parts of the scale have a disparate sound quality	Tone is even in all registers
	Consistently sings out of tune	Frequently sings out of tune	Occasionally sings out of tune	Intonation is accurate

Musicality	1 Serious flaws inhibit expressivity and communication	2 Evidence that technique is on the right track, but flaws and inconsistencies threaten communication	3 Good technique; minor flaws or inconsistencies occasionally inhabit communication	4 Excellent technique supports expressive and communicative singing
	No legato	Occasional legato	Frequent legato, but occasionally disconnects from note to note	Sings with consistent legato
	Breaths disrupt or distract from the music line and/or dramatic impetus of the piece	Breath placement frequently disrupts the musical line or distracts from the dramatic impetus	Breath placement is frequently appropriate; occasionally breathes in places that disrupt the musical line or distract from the dramatic impetus	Breaths are musical and do not disrupt the musical line or distract from the dramatic impetus
	No contrast in volume between loud and soft dynamics	Occasionally illustrates changes in dynamics	Illustrates changes in volume, but some choices not appropriate due to score, style, instrumentation or performance venue	Illustrates changes in dynamics according to score, style, instrumentation, and performance venue
	Musical phrases do not provide forward momentum; static	Most phrases lack sense of forward momentum	Most phrases are clearly shaped into musical segments	Phrases are clearly shaped into musical segments that aid in communicating the text
	The tempi or speed of the music conflicts with score indications, style, tradition, or personal ability	Speed of the music is frequently at odds with score indications, style, tradition	Speed of the music reflects score indications, style, and traditions; occasionally tempi are inappropriate	Tempi reflect score indication, style, and tradition
	No changes in tone color	Occasional changes in tone quality	Changes in tonal color or quality reflect the dramatic impetus or musical style of the piece	Changes in tone quality reflect the dramatic impetus or musical style of the piece; vocal colors promote communication

Stage Deportment & Interpretation	1 Serious flaws inhibit expressivity and communication	2 Evidence that technique is on the right track, but flaws and inconsistencies threaten communication	3 Good technique; minor flaws or inconsistencies occasionally inhabit communication	4 Excellent technique supports expressive and communicative singing
	Facial expressions do not reflect character or drama of the piece; Facial expressions lack commitment	Facial expressions occasionally portray the character or dramatic impetus, or are frequently out of character	Facial expressions frequently portray the character or dramatic impetus; occasionally or briefly out of character	Facial expressions are emotive, committed, reflect the character, and move the drama of the piece forward
	Posture is unenergetic, inhibits technique, and does not support the character of the piece	Posture is frequently unenergetic, inhibits technique, and/or does not support the character of the piece	Posture occasionally lacks energy, inhibits good technique, or does not fit the character of the piece	Posture exudes energy, good technique, and/or the character of the piece
	Physical movements are incommunicative and distractive	Many physical movements are ineffective and/or do not support the drama	Physical movements frequently support the dramatic impetus of the piece; occasional movements are ineffective or distracting	Physical movements align with the dramatic impetus of the character

Technique	1 Serious flaws inhibit expressivity and communication	2 Evidence that technique is on the right track, but flaws and inconsistencies threaten communication	3 Good technique; minor flaws or inconsistencies occasionally inhabit communication	4 Excellent technique supports expressive and communicative singing
	Diction is incorrect and/or unintelligible	Pronunciation of the text is frequently incorrect and/or unintelligible	Diction is primarily correct; few mistakes in pronunciation of the text	Pronunciation of the text supports communication
	Vocal style is inappropriate to the piece/genre; misunderstanding of the composer's musical intent and/or inconsistent with the historical period of composition	Vocal style is inappropriate; occasionally exhibits composer's intention and/or knowledge of the correct historical period of composition	Vocal style is primarily correct; performance is occasionally inconsistent with the historical period of composition	Vocal style is appropriate to the piece/genre; understands the composer's musical intent and is consistent with the historical period of composition
	Pitches and rhythms are incorrect	Consistent mistakes in pitches and rhythms	Rare mistakes in pitches and rhythms	Pitches and rhythms are correct
	Voice not audible throughout the performance hall	Voice excessively loud or soft; inappropriate for setting	Occasionally difficult to hear and/or excessively loud for performance setting	Vocal projection is appropriate for performance setting
	Noisy, uncontrolled inhalations; lacks *appoggio*	Inconsistent *appoggio*; breaths are frequently noisy and/or obstructed	Occasional audible breaths or lapses in *appoggio*	Breaths are controlled; *appoggio* utilized consistently; audible breaths aid communication
	No vibrato present; straight tone is used without dramatic purpose	The vibrato is frequently too wide/slow (wobble), or too narrow/fast (flutter)	Occasionally, the vibrato is too wide/slow (wobble), or too narrow/fast (flutter)	Vibrato is even and natural; does not distract

Figure 3.2. Medina Voice Performance Rubric.

Chapter 4

Semester Assessment: Assigning The Course Grade

Few would argue that the benefits of assessment—to direct student learning and inform teaching practice—are philosophically attractive. The use of assessment in music, however, presents unique challenges. Several standardized music assessments were developed over the course of the twentieth century. Assessments such as the Seashore Measures of Musical Talent (1919, revised 1960), Gordon's Musical Aptitude Profile (1965), and Colwell's Music Achievement Test (1969), attempted to measure students' dictation, pitch matching, and rhythmic skills. Yet, standardized music assessments, with the exception of the National Assessment of Educational Progress's 1998 assessment, have curiously omitted that which they purportedly value most—music performance.

In an effort to develop more meaningful instruction and assessment in music, art, and creative writing, Harvard University's Project Zero, the Educational Testing Service, and the Pittsburgh Public School System collaborated from 1986-1991 on an innovative project coined Arts PROPEL. According to PROPEL, students are producers, perceivers and reflectors. The acronym for the project reflects these roles: "PRO for production, which includes an R for reflection; PE for perception, and L for the learning that results."[13] In these middle and high school general music classes, students designed formative portfolios that included samples of their productions (rehearsals and performances), reflections (responses to other works of music or about their own

---

[13] Ellen Winner, *Arts PROPEL: An Introductory Handbook* (NP: Educational Testing Service, 1992), 10.

processes of making music), and perceptions (noticing associations such as similar poets, themes or musical motives, and distinguishing between other works of art). According to PROPEL researchers "…learning in music occurs when students generate music,…listen discerningly,…and think critically about what they're producing and/or hearing."[14] In the spirit of the assessment axiom, "what is treasured gets measured," voice instructors must encourage students to practice the skills necessary to succeed in the professional field.

While traditional forms of product assessment—objective tests, papers and reviews, and juries—and product measures—rubrics and checklists—can positively contribute to the learning experience, they fail to reflect the breadth and depth of a student's progress in the studio. Objective tests measure knowledge of music, but cannot be constructed to measure the student's musical product, the largest focus of applied lessons. Papers and recital reviews, while beneficial for assessing both musical knowledge and perceptions, again lack the ability to measure musical product. Due to the individual nature of applied lessons, the instructor would be required to construct objective tests or paper prompts based on each individual student's current repertoire. The difficulty of construction and the time required to both create and grade these assignments make them a poor choice in most circumstances. More importantly, assigning a student's applied voice grade based on an assignment that does not require them to sing renders the assessment method invalid. Instructors need a customizable assessment tool capable of measuring traits from all learning domains and flexible enough to serve a variety of purposes.

---

[14] Lyle Davidson et al., *Arts PROPEL: A Handbook for Music* ed. Ellen Winner (NP: Educational Testing Services, 1992), 6.

Portfolios provide ample examples of product, process, and perception that are unmatched by other forms of assessment. Used as a method to collect various artifacts of the student's progress across multiple learning domains, it targets the processes and products deemed most valuable in the voice profession. A portfolio collects representations of student work gathered over a predetermined period of time. Its purpose may be either formative or summative, and depending on its design, may focus on products, learning processes, or student perceptions. Portfolios have been successfully utilized in other fields as both forms of assessment and as documentation of teaching effectiveness in employment searches. Kubiszyn relates portfolios to the student's "recital," an opportunity for the students to "show what they can do and to verify the trust and confidence that [the teacher] and their family have placed in them."[15] Portfolios provide a structure to collect and assess examples of student work that mirror the wide range of lessons taught in the voice studio.

Portfolio assessment allows the instructor to organize, prioritize, and efficiently measure progress in all three learning domains. Detailed descriptions of personal goals would offer insights into affective progress. Engaging in metacognition—or to reflect on a student's own thinking—encourages autonomous learners who are "empowered as stakeholders in their own learning."[16] Video-recordings of rehearsals and recitals evidence improvements in stage deportment and physicality, and may help track

---

[15] Tom Kubiszyn and Gary Borich, *Educational Testing and Measurement: Classroom Application and Practice*, 7th ed., (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003), 177.

[16] Kay Burke, *How to Assess Authentic Learning*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2009), 43.

recurring physical errors such as jaw tension or poor posture. Additional assignments could allow students to expound on historical or theoretical concepts important to the music he or she is studying. Portfolios provide documentation of the learning process, supplying the student with concrete examples of his or her improvement. The instructor, in turn, has access to examples of student work over time and can thus verify how well certain topics were taught—or learned. The portfolio provides the instructor with the basis for assigning a course grade. As Quinlan aptly states, "…in this litigious society of accountability, it just makes sense for educators to document, document, document!"[17] Portfolios may serve as one form of documentation.

The make-up of the portfolio in the applied voice studio will depend on the individual goals articulated by both the student and the teacher, and may vary from semester to semester. A variety of samples consisting of the three roles articulated by Arts PROPEL—producer, perceiver, and reflector—and of the taxonomy of educational domains—objective, psychomotor, and affective—will ensure a well-balanced and thorough review of the student's work. In *How to Assess Authentic Learning*, Burke summarizes the implementation of portfolios in three tasks: "collecting, selecting, and reflecting."[18] Throughout the predetermined timeline, students collect a variety of work that represents the breadth of their studies. Several weeks before the end of the term, both the student and teacher select items from the student's collection. To foster student involvement, individual choice, and a student's best work, and to evaluate a student's

---

[17] Audrey M. Quinlan, *A Complete Guide to Rubrics: Assessment Made Easy for Teachers, K-College* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006), 3.

[18] Burke, 43.

ability to self-assess, portfolio enthusiasts suggest allowing the student to pick some of the entries he or she would like to have graded. The instructor then chooses the remaining entries to align with his or her course objectives. Finally, students should reflect on the selected entries. To spur student thought, Burke suggests a labeling system such as "showcases my interests," "my best work," or "most challenging."[19] Supplying the student with prompts may assist his or her reflections.

In addition to providing a record of achievement, the portfolio should serve as a toolbox for the singer. A current repertoire list, performance resume, and clean copies of the music he or she is currently studying would prepare a student for future and last-minute performance or employment opportunities. Asking the student to provide a list or statement of both technical and professional goals would inform the instructor of the student's aspirations. Though these questions are frequently asked at the initial lesson, many students and instructors are amazed to find that course work and life experiences change the students' ambitions. While it is the responsibility of the instructor to teach a student regardless of the student's professional aspirations, the pacing of the lesson, repertoire studied, and issues confronted will differ for the student aiming to have fun and the student yearning for the opera stage.

Portfolio assignments should imitate the skills of professional musicianship. Suggestions include researching the historical background on the works, composers, and poets they are studying, thereby providing a link to the core curriculum. Detailed translations and International Phonetic Alphabet transcriptions of foreign language works would require the student to apply his or her major field coursework in the studio and

---

[19] Burke, 48.

could serve as a future resource. More advanced students might be asked to provide a list of repertoire they wish to sing in the future. In addition to serving as inspiration for future recitals, this list will assist the instructor in understanding the student's perspective of his or her own voice. If a student is consistently indicating a desire to sing repertoire outside his or her technical capabilities or *Fach*, the instructor may initiate self-awareness exercises that help the singer to build and showcase his or her own strengths. If the student is instead drawn to specific musical elements of pieces that lie outside his or her *Fach*, the instructor might lead a student toward appropriate repertoire with similar characteristics.

Requiring students to reflect and critique the audio and audio-visual recordings of great artists could both ground them in the rich traditions of the vocal arts and provide them with ample opportunities to develop a proper tonal model. Likewise, assigning short readings and written reflections, such as a chapter from Shirlee Emmon's *Power Performance for Singers* or Eloise Ristad's *A Soprano on Her Head* for the student paralyzed by stage anxiety, could further help the teacher to tailor his or her instruction without consuming valuable lesson time.

Finally, the portfolio must include recordings of the student. Recorded lessons could be accompanied by a reflection that includes the warm-ups and their purposes, lesson goals, and successes and critiques. Recordings of the student's private practice sessions will reveal the efficiency and effectiveness of his or her rehearsal methods. Many students, for example, fail to isolate problems in the practice room and instead inanely sing the pieces from start to finish numerous times. These issues and others could be prevented or corrected far sooner by analyzing a student's practicing technique.

Recordings of a student performing would serve a variety of purposes. In addition to serving as an artifact that details progress over time, quality recordings may be used for self-promotion on websites or for auditions and competitions. Juxtaposing performance recordings with recordings made under less stressful circumstances may help a student to identify habits or quirks that occur due to performance anxiety.

Joi Carlin lists many advantages of video and audio taping in a 1996 article written for *Teaching Music*. Recordings provide legitimate records of the learning processes and products. Replaying these tapes allows the student to focus on his or her technique, and provides them with another vantage point to self-assess. If the taping reoccurs at several intervals, the student and teacher will have the opportunity to evaluate improvement over time. Finally, student-teacher interactions are preserved.[20] By examining the tapes, either party may identify either lapses of communication or teaching techniques that were particularly effective for the individual student. Setting the camera to observe a different vantage point may allow the instructor to observe idiosyncrasies that might go unnoticed by the instructor while teaching from his or her normal perch.

The primary challenges of implementing portfolio assessment projects are logistical. Physically, the end product will vary depending on the portfolio's contents and purpose. Some portfolios may take shape nicely in a box, file, or three-ring binder. The innovation of cloud computing and the ability to store large files on the internet make websites and digital versions appealing. Free services such as Soundcloud and YouTube enable a student to upload and share files. Programs such as Adobe InDesign enable the

---

[20] Joi Carlin, "Videotape as an Assessment Tool," *Teaching Music* 3, no. 4 (Feb. 1996), 38-40.

student to create interactive projects that house audio, video, and text within a single document. Additionally, file sharing programs, such as Box or Dropbox, allow users to accrue, collaborate, and access a variety of file types without the burden of storing many large files on a single hard drive. The student could invite the instructor to collaborate or comment on a particular file, enabling quick feedback with limited digital mess.

Like any assessment measure, portfolios require an investment of time to define the project and review the results. Yet the thought of assessing a stack of large projects at the end of the semester is daunting, particularly when an instructor considers the many recitals and other obligations that fall at the end of the term. The portfolio need not be a lump project due at the end of the term. Rather, individual assignments can be completed and reviewed throughout the semester. To manage the influx of assignments, the instructor may divide the students into groups, alternating the review of entries between groups each week. No doubt the portfolio will also require additional effort on behalf of the student, and instructors may face resistance from those students who expect to merely show up each lesson and sing. A well-designed portfolio asks students to not only perform the tasks of a professional musician, but also to document them. This is not busy work. As the responses from the pilot program of Arts PROPEL reported, "If time devoted to discussion and writing focuses work, it is not seen as time 'lost' from rehearsal, composition, or listening."[21] Instructors must take the time to teach not only the art of singing, but the skills and techniques that lead a student to distinguish and independently pursue that art.

---

[21] Davidson, et al., 10.

Deciding how to assess the portfolio requires just as much thought as determining what entries to include. Clearly, a taped performance cannot be evaluated in the same manner as a word-for-word transliteration assignment. Dirth suggests the creation of clear rubrics that detail each gradation of achievement.[22] The rubric would vary depending on the type of assignment included, and the rubric assessing the portfolio as a whole would differ from the rubrics designed for the portfolios' individual parts. Implementing rubrics and checklists may help an instructor to define his or her course objectives more clearly and communicate that to the student. These methods of performance assessment help teachers "…identify learning gaps, choose appropriate interventions, and monitor progress toward helping all students meet academic goals."[23]

Though one intention of the portfolio is to provide tangible support for the student's final grade, some scholars recommend grading with few gradations and specificity. This approach, which may take the form of check-plus, check, or check-minus—or even excellent, satisfactory, or needs improvement—may be easier to translate into numerical or letter grades. The most helpful to students, however, is not the vague label we assign as shorthand. The most important component of portfolio grading is the running commentary from the teacher on the individual entries. Qualitative comments have the ability to inform students of their strengths and weaknesses and to reinforce positive behaviors possessed by professional musicians with significantly more detail than a quantitative mark. In many situations, however, it may prove wisest to adopt a

---

[22] Kevin Dirth, "Implementing Portfolio Assessment in the Music Performance Classroom," (DME diss., Columbia University, 2000), 33.

[23] Burke, 92.

system where both qualitative and quantitative judgments are made. In this case, the qualitative remarks made by the instructor serve as documentation and support for the instructor's quantitative judgments. Furthermore, not all feedback needs to be presented to the student in written form. A brief discussion in the first moments of a lesson allow the instructor to make observations about the quality of a student's work and allow a student the opportunity to ask questions.

Though the suggested documents for inclusion in an applied voice portfolio are numerous, Dirth asserts that not all portfolio entries need to be graded individually. Other entries may be used in assessing the portfolio for completeness. An entry may not prove useful for immediate analysis, yet a future concern may warrant comparison of past artifacts. Allowing both the instructor and student to earmark particular entries for assessment ensures that the resulting assessment aligns with the goals of both parties.

Through clarifying educational objectives and goals, motivating students to a higher level of achievement, and furnishing data for decision-making, assessments provide material for reflection on strengths and weaknesses, and detail progress over time. By instituting a portfolio, instructors may more easily assess the variety of tasks and breadth of knowledge inherent in the study of applied voice. Though nontraditional in the musical arts, the easily-customizable portfolio assessment provides a method of documenting expectations, feedback, and accomplishments. Prioritizing preparation and self-assessment through the use of a portfolio creates more knowledgeable and autonomous singers, better prepared to face the competition inherent in the profession of professional singing.

Regardless of whether an instructor chooses to implement portfolios in his or her studio, assessment in the applied voice studio can and should remain fluid. The methods of assessment will vary depending on the educational needs of the student, and the instructor should adapt his or her assessment methods to align with the goals of the student. Yet studio voice teachers will remain without a valuable teaching tool unless they are provided with the support, training and time to implement assessment measures. The specificity required to clarify learning objectives, paired with the constant relay of constructive feedback, ensure that, above all else, assessment is instructional.

Portfolio Prompts

Practice/Lesson Review Prompt

1. Notate the warm-ups and provide a technical objective for each.
2. List the pieces studied.
3. Specifically list your and/or your teacher's goals for the lesson/practice session.
4. How did you attempt to meet those goals?
5. What was executed well in the lesson/practice session?
6. What areas need improvement?
7. What general themes underlie the instructor's praise and/or critiques?

Figure 4.1. Sample Practice or Lesson Review Prompt.

Technical and Professional Goal-Setting Prompt

Answer each question for each of your goals.

1. What, specifically, do you hope to accomplish?
2. With what methods and means will you measure your success?
3. How will you know when you have accomplished your goal?
4. What steps will you take to meet your goal?
5. By when do you hope to accomplish this goal?

Figure 4.2. Sample Technical and Professional Goal-Setting Prompt.

Great Artist Observation Prompt

1. Properly cite the recording according to Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. If not present in your citation, please include the following:
    - Singer
    - Voice Type
    - Work performed
    - Composer of Work
    - Venue
    - Year
2. Choose one of the following elements and describe how it contributed to the artist's performance:
    - Onset
    - Breath
    - Dynamics
    - Articulation
    - Interpretation
    - Diction
    - Tempo
3. Describe musical choices (tempi, dynamics, vocal colors, etc…) that contribute to the audience's understanding of the text.
4. Describe the artist's stage deportment (facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc.).
5. In your opinion, what made this performance effective/not effective?

Figure 4.3. Sample Great Artist Observation Prompt.

Cross-Curricular Musical Analysis

1. Provide the measure number(s) for the apex of the piece. What musical evidence (harmony, rhythm, performance indications, etc.) confirms that this is the climax of the piece? What textual evidence confirms that this is the climax of the piece?

2. What is the composer attempting to communicate? Using the elements of music (pitch, rhythm, harmony, articulation, text, form, accompaniment), identify ways in which the composer attempts to advance this communication.

3. Provide an International Phonetic Alphabet transliteration of the piece.

4. Provide a word-for-word translation of the piece.

5. Provide a dramatic or colloquial translation of the piece.

6. Describe the social, political, religious climate at the time of the piece's composition, or in the case of opera/oratorio, at the time the piece is set. How does this insight inform your performance of the piece?

7. Compare this piece to the composer's other vocal output. Identify similarities and differences in compositional style. Compare this piece to the composer's instrumental output. When writing for instrumental ensembles, which instrumental family is most similar to the voice? How does this insight inform your performance of the piece?

Figure 4.4. Cross-Curricular Musical Analysis Prompt.

Conclusion

Neither checklists, rating scales, nor rubrics exclusively summarize the work accomplished in the voice studio. Instead, a multi-level assessment approach is best suited for identifying the range of products, processes, and perceptions desired in private voice instruction. Because the development of the vocal mechanism depends on various uncontrollable factors, students should be encouraged to advance the skills of which they have control. Success in the voice studio is not solely defined by a stage-ready voice. Goal setting, time management, professional development, theoretical analysis, and aural training will improve the student's self-efficacy and independence, thereby encouraging life-long music making.

Used appropriately, assessment provides the instructor with the information to make decisions and form future instructional experiences. The relationship between instruction and assessment is symbiotic. The instructor is constantly evaluating the quality of student performance and instruction design. The resulting data encourages the instructor to tweak instruction. The new instructional methods and resulting student performance are evaluated again, all in an effort to promote student learning.

Responsible assessment takes into account what voice teachers expect students to be able to do. The portfolio provides a framework by which instructors may evaluate vocal products, processes, and perceptions. Smaller measures, such as checklists, rubrics, and rating scales, together with reflective essays, student recordings, and translations, provide evidence of student performance. When thoughtfully reviewed, they allow the student-teacher conversation to continue outside of the weekly lesson, and encourage regular and specific feedback.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abeles, Harold F. and Lori A. Custodero. *Critical Issues in Music Education: Contemporary Theory and Practice.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Bailey, Ben Edward. *Constructing Classroom Tests in Music.* Northbrook, IL: Whitehall Company, 1971.

Bauer, W.I., and R. E. Dunn. "Digital Reflection: The Electronic Portfolio in Music Teacher Education." *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 13, no. 1 (Fall, 2003): 7-20.

Bergee, Martin J. "Performer, Rater, Occasion, and Sequence as Sources of Variability in Music Performance Assessment." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 55, no. 4 (Winter, 2007): 344–358.

Bergonzi, Louis. "'Whadya Get?': Evaluation, Recognition, Motivation, Competition and School Orchestra Programs." In *Teaching Music Through Performance in Orchestra, Volume 2*, edited by David Littrell, 15-40. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2003.

Berkeland, Judy A. "Portfolio Assessment and Music." Masters thesis, Minnesota State University – Mankato, 1999.

Bloom, Benjamin S., ed. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook, Cognitive Domain.* New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1956.

Burke, Kay. *How to Assess Authentic Learning*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2009.

Carlin, Joi. "Videotape as an Assessment Tool," *Teaching Music* 3, no. 4 (Feb. 1996): 38-40.

Chase, Jared A. and Ramona Houmanfar. "The Differential Effects of Elaborate Feedback and Basic Feedback on Student Performance in a Modified, Personalized System of Instruction Course." *Journal of Behavioral Education* 18, no. 3 (August 2009): 245-265.

Cope, Carolyn O "Steps Towards Effective Assessment." *Music Educator's Journal* 83, no. 1 (July, 1996): 39-42.

Colwell, Richard. "Assessment's Potential in Music Education." In *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning: A Project of the Music Educators*

National Conference, edited by Richard Colwell and Carol Richardson, 1128-1158. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Davidson, Lyle, Carol Myford, Don Plasket, Larry Scripp, Spence Swinton, Bruce Torff, and Janet Waanders. *Arts PROPEL: A Handbook for Music.* Edited by Ellen Winner. N.p.: Educational Testing Services, 1992.

Dirth, Kevin. "Implementing Portfolio Assessment in the Music Performance Classroom." DME diss., Columbia University, 2000.

Doscher, Barbara M. *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1994.

Fautley, Martin. *Assessment in Music Education*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Goolsby, Thomas W. "Portfolio Assessment for Better Evaluation," *Music Educators Journal* 48, no. 3 (Nov. 1995): 39-44.

Gutsch, Kenneth Urial. *Objective Measurement in Instrumental Music Performance. Cooperative Research Project No. 1734.* Hattiesburg, Mississippi: University of Southern Mississippi, 1964.

Hale, Connie L., and Susan K. Green. "Six Key Principles for Music Assessment." *Music Educator's Journal* 95, no. 4 (July, 2011): 27-31.

Harrow, Anita J. *A Taxonomy of the Psychomotor Domain.* New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972.

Hewitt, Allan. "Musical Styles as Communities of Practice Challenges for Learning: Teaching and Assessment of Music in Higher Education." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 8, no. 3 (September, 2009): 329–337.

Johnson, Elizabeth. "Assessment in the University Applied Voice Studio." Lecture, New Voice Educators Symposium, Bloomington, IN, January 26-27, 2007.

Kellaghan, Thomas, and Vincent Greaney, *Using Assessment to Improve the Quality of Education.* Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2001.

Kennell, Richard. "Systematic Research in Studio Instruction in Music." In *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning: A Project of the Music Educators National Conference*, edited by Richard Colwell and Carol Richardson, 243-256. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Kubiszyn, Tom, and Gary Borich. *Educational Testing and Measurement: Classroom Application and Practice*. 7th ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003.

Latimer Jr., Marvin E., and Martin J. Bergee, and Mary L Cohen. "Reliability and Perceived Pedagogical Utility of a Weighted Music Performance Assessment Rubric." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 58, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 168–183.

Lehman, Paul R. *Test and Measurements in Music.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968.

Miller, M. David, Robert L. Linn, and Norman E. Gronlund. *Measurement and Assessment in Teaching*, 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2009.

Miller, Richard. *The Structure of Singing*: System and Art in Vocal Technique. Belmont, CA: The Wadsworth Group, 1996.

McKinney, James. *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults: A Manual for Teachings of Singing and for Choir Directors*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1994.

Pazitka-Munroe, Wendolin. "The Construction and Validation of an Audition Instrument to Measure the Vocal Performance of College Singers Auditioning for Choral Ensembles." DME diss., Indiana University, 2001.

Quinlan, Audrey M. *A Complete Guide to Rubrics: Assessment Made Easy for Teachers, K-College*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006.

Randall, Mac. "Beyond the Grade." *Teaching Music* 17, no. 6 (April, 2010): 36-39.

Reimer, Mark U. "Assessing Individual Performance in the College Band." *Research and Issues in Music Education* 7, no. 1 (September, 2009): 1–13.

Rosenshine, Barak, Hildegard Froehlich, and Inshad Fakhouri. "Systematic Instruction." In *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning: A Project of the Music Educators National Conference*, edited by Richard Colwell and Carol Richardson, 299-314. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Russell, Joshua A., and James R. Austin. "Assessment Practices of Secondary Music Teachers." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 58, no. 1 (April, 2010): 37–54.

Smith, Jeffrey K., Lisa F. Smith, and Richard De Lisi. *Natural Classroom Assessment: Designing Seamless Instruction and Assessment.* Edited by Thomas R. Guskey and Robert J. Marzano. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc., 2001.

Straub, Dorothy A. "Assessment: It's a Good Thing for Orchestra." In *Teaching Music Through Performance in Orchestra, Volume 2*, edited by David Littrell, 85-112. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2003.

Tarnowski, S., M. Knutson, E. Gleason, C. Gleason, and E. Songer. "Building a Professional Portfolio." *Music Educators Journal* 85, no. 1 (Jul., 1998): 5, 17.

Thorndike, Robert M., and Tracy Thorndike-Christ. *Measurement and Evaluation in Psychology and Education*. 8th ed. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2010.

Van den Berg, J., and Vennard, W. "Toward an Objective Vocabulary," *NATS Bulletin* 15 (1959): 10-15.

Walker, Darwin E. *Teaching Music: Managing the Successful Music Program*. 2nd ed. New York: Schirmer Books, 1998.

Whybrew, William E. *Measurement and Evaluation in Music*, 2nd edition. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1971.

Winner, Ellen. *Arts PROPEL: An Introductory Handbook*. N.p.: Educational Testing Service, 1992.